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INFO RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 8077
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SUBJECT: COLOMBIAN AND MEXICAN AUTHORITIES MOVING SWIFTLY IN WAKE OF
RECENT MEXICAN COCAINE SEIZURES

REF: BOGOTA 7470

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Government of Mexico (GOM) seized two large cocaine shipments that originated from Colombian seaports in October. In response to these seizures, the Government of Colombia (GOC) sought additional information from the GOM and initiated formal investigations of all involved parties to include any Colombian police who may have played a role in facilitating the passage of the contaminated containers through the port inspection process. The two governments continue to cooperate closely to advance their respective investigations and identify those responsible for these illicit shipments. END SUMMARY.

OVER THIRTY TONS OF COCAINE SEIZED

2. (SBU) On October 5, 2007 Mexican authorities seized 11.7 tons of cocaine in Tampico, following the arrival of these cocaine-laden containers from the Mexican port of Altamira. The Tampico containers originated from the port of Cartagena, Colombia. On October 31, 2007 Mexican authorities seized 23.5 tons of cocaine in Manzanillo which had arrived from the port of Buenaventura, Colombia.

GOC REACTION

3. (SBU) The GOC, and in particular the Colombian National Police's Anti-Narcotics Command (DIRAN), immediately took the following actions upon learning of these Mexican seizures:

- Notified the GOC Attorney General's office (Fiscalia) of these seizures and requested the initiation of criminal investigations--including investigation and prosecution of any police who might become suspects.

- Deployed National Police polygraph teams (with Embassy NAS and ICE support) to both involved Colombian ports to conduct exams of DIRAN Port Commanders, selected members of their units, and civilian workers who might have had contact with the contaminated shipments.

- Based on polygraph results and subsequent interviews, the DIRAN Commander, Brigadier General Alvaro Caro Melendez, placed the DIRAN Buenaventura Port Commander on administrative leave and reassigned several other police officers, from both ports, pending the final outcome of the ongoing Colombian National Police and Colombian Fiscalia investigations.

CLOSE COLOMBIAN-MEXICAN COOPERATION

¶4. (SBU) These seizures have resulted in what one senior DIRAN officer described as "an unprecedented level" of bilateral investigative cooperation between the GOC and GOM. Examples of this newfound collaboration include:

- Multiple phone contacts between GOM and GOC officials involved in these cases, including an extended telephonic conversation between Colombian National Police Commander Oscar Naranjo and Mexican Attorney General Eduardo Medina Mora on November 1, 2007.
- Face-to-face discussions in Bogota on November 9, 2007 between Medina Mora, Naranjo and Caro during the Attorney General's recent visit to Colombia for unrelated tri-lateral discussions (Mexico, Colombia, and U.S.). Medina Mora also met separately with Colombian Fiscalía and DIRAN officials responsible for conducting the investigations later that same day.
- The assignment of a Mexican Attorney General's Office investigator to travel to Colombia and work directly with Colombian investigators on both cases; the investigator arrived in Cartagena on November 12, 2007 and remained through November 15, 2007; he plans to return to Colombia on November 19, 2007 to continue his coordination with GOC representatives.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Despite the narcotraffickers' recent success in smuggling these large quantities of cocaine out of Colombian ports, the rapid reaction of the GOM, coupled with the strong bilateral cooperation between Mexican and Colombian authorities, suggests that these shipments may serve as a positive catalyst. If the parties continue their close collaboration with one another on these

investigations, not only will a heavy economic blow have been dealt to these narcotraffickers through the seizures, but a new era of GOC-GOM cooperation on these matters ensue in as well.

BROWNFIELD